

Circle The Lake Tour Lake St. Clair



Todd McInturf / The Detroit News Photo

Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative Executive Director Bradley Simmons, left, and Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel, right, pose with the new Circle The Lake Tour Lake St. Clair sign as Gerard Santoro, center, Macomb County Department of Planning & Economic Development senior planner for special projects, introduces them Friday, June 10, 2011. The Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative hosts a "Celebrate the Lake" event at MacRay Harbor in Harrison Township to increase the lake's profile as a tourist recreation destination. The event coincides with the Clinton River Watershed Council's annual River Day event and National Marina Day.

Macomb County kicks off Lake St. Clair tourism initiative

CHARLES E. RAMIREZ/ The Detroit News / June 10, 2011

Harrison Township— Call it a sign of the times.

On Friday, Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel unveiled a program to draw attention to hot spots around Lake St. Clair.

Under the effort, the county will install 50 signs that read "Circle the Lake Tour — Lake St. Clair" along Macomb County highways, surface roads and freeways.

"A lot of people traveling in the county don't even know that they're this close to the lake," he said. "These signs will tell people 'Come visit the county's coastal area, our marinas and our beaches.' "

Hackel announced the new program during the kickoff of "Celebrate the Lake" weekend at the MacRay Banquet Center on North River Road in Harrison Township.

The Anchor Bay Yachting Association, the Clinton River Watershed Council and the Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative organized the event, which runs through Sunday, to promote safe boating and encourage water conservation.

Officials said work crews with the county's Road Department are scheduled to start erecting the blue and green reflective metal road signs within the month. The Road Department also fabricated the signs at its sign-making shop.

The project's price tag is about \$9,500, said Gerry Santoro, who works for the county's Planning and Economic Development Department.

Santoro also said the county is in talks with neighboring counties along Lake St. Clair and the government of Ontario, Canada, to put up similar signage.

The program also includes 12 "Coastal Business District" signs to identify parts of New Baltimore, Harrison Township and St. Clair Shores.

In addition, the county has launched a website, www.TourLakeStClair.com, featuring information about the lake, including a map and fishing reports.

The lake tour sign program is part of Hackel's so-called "New Blue Economy," a push to promote the county's waterways like Lake St. Clair and the Clinton River as tourist and recreation destinations and use them to drive economic development.

cramirez@detnews.com (313) 222-2058

